J: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

from Adeq and then south-eastwards towards the Maria villages of Mangnar *pargana*, streams flow southwards or south-westwards into the Indrawati. 133

Though this block of hills is a homogeneous tract, peopled entirely by Hill Marias, it unfortunately is split up administratively. The south-western corner above Bhamragarh and Lahir is British territory, part of the Ahiri zamindari of Chanda district. All the *parganas* north of the watershed between the Nei Bherat and Indrawati on the one hand and the Gudra on the other are in Antagarh tahsil. The slopes draining into the Indrawati from the Chanda border eastwards to a line running north from the confluence of the Indrawati and the Dantewara form the Kutru Mar and the Bhairamgarh Mar *parganas* of Kutru zamindari; the Hikul-Toinar-Handawada group of eight hill villages east of this is part of Dantewara tahsil, and the few hill villages at the south-east corner are part of the outlying Mangnar *pargana* of the Bhopalpatnam zamindari.

The peaks of the Abujhmar vary in height from 2,050 feet on the northern fringes to 3,322, the highest point near Tadanar in Mangnar *pargana*. Fourteen peaks exceed 3,000 feet in height. Except the Marias themselves, few persons in Bastar know the tract at all; and before I visited it, all the old tales served up to Glasfurd in the sixties were again cooked up for my benefit; the country was so rugged that I should have to climb on my hands and knees; it was impossible for elephants and quite out of the question for horses; I should be unable to get bearers for my camp kit; fever was rampant; distances were enormous; and so on. Some of the marches are difficult; but then a car can be taken now up to Orcha, the chief village of Chhota Dongar Mar; the people are friendly in the extreme, and if properly treated and reimbursed in salt, beads, mirrors, cloth and pork, and allowed to dance at every camp, they will turn out in numbers to carry all necessary equipment. It is not difficult to arrange camps at distances at once reasonable for the walker and far enough apart to make it unnecessary to detain bearers from the previous camp to carry luggage on to the next camp. There are no cart tracks and no carts; and there are many steep ascents and descents on the hill tracks. Good water is everywhere available from clear perennial springs. The hills are far freer from mosquitoes and fever than the plains below; but the traveller who brings a medical assistant and simple medicines with him will find the Marias in great need of elementary medical relief and very grateful for it. [489]

The scenery varies. On the edges of the hills there are often fine views of the plains below, while on the northern and eastern